

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

The Utah Statesman

Students

Fall 2015

2015 Football Preview

Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/newspapers>

Recommended Citation

Utah State University, "2015 Football Preview" (2015). *The Utah Statesman*. 290.
<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/newspapers/290>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Students at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Utah Statesman by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.





2015 FOOTBALL PREVIEW

10 FACTS

YOU MAY NOT KNOW

THE KEETON EFFECT:

THE FINAL CHAPTER

LAST MAN DOWN

POSITION-BY-POSITION PREVIEW

OPPONENT OUTLOOK

WWW.USUSTATESMAN.COM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 10 THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT USU FOOTBALL

8 STARTING LINEUP/POSITION PREVIEWS

14 THE KEETON EFFECT

18 NEXT MAN DOWN

20 THE COMPETITION



DESIGNED BY:
MELODY CAMPBELL
KYLEE LARSEN
TIMOTHY R. OLSEN
JEFFREY DAHDAH
KALEN TAYLOR

WRITTEN BY:
LOGAN JONES
THOMAS SORENSON
KALEN TAYLOR
JEFFREY DAHDAH

CONTRIBUTORS:
BRENNAN KELLY
TIMOTHY R. OLSEN

Gameday changes



By **Thomas Sorenson**
SENIOR SPORTS WRITER

Utah State Athletics and Campus Recreation Vice President Thomas Rogers compared the athletics program at Utah State to the “front porch” of the university’s house. “It’s the first thing you see,” he said.

As the football program has raised its local and national awareness over the past five years, it has become an important part of the USU house. This season, the athletic department and the HURD are making a number of changes to improve the gameday experience for Aggie fans and Utah State students alike.

“Athletics understands that it’s not just a game, it’s an experience,” Rogers said. “It’s an entertainment industry.”

In that light, here are some of the changes that will be seen around the stadium and campus this season:

- Head coach Matt Wells and new athletic director John Hartwell will kick off the 2015 football season by hosting a pep rally on campus the day before the first game. The Hurd will be there with food and drinks and will be giving out t-shirts and other prizes. There will also be a pep rally before the homecoming game.

- Every game will now have a tower of fire as the Aggies run onto the field for player introductions.

- Beginning this season, the stadium will now be known as Maverik Stadium. The 22-year deal with Maverik, Inc. gives USU the needed funds to complete a number of renovation projects around the stadium, including construction of a new press box.

- The Hurd is working with the athletics department to implement a reward system this season. Students who attend specified games will be

credited with points; prizes include sunglasses, custom Nike t-shirts, backpacks and a trip to the Mountain West Conference basketball tournament. Students will be awarded based on how many points they get.

- The Hurd will put together a short highlight video to help Aggie fans get ready for the football game each week.

- The game against Boise State will have a military flyover. Skydivers will also parachute in the game ball from 10,000 feet.

- The pregame tailgate festivities have been revamped this season. Each game will now have a live concert, as well as food trucks and other local vendors.

- The postgame festivities have also been upgraded for 2015. Immediately after each game, there will be a “fifth quarter” with on-field entertainment and more.

- There will be a firework

show at the stadium after the SUU and Wyoming games.

- The Aggies have a new PA announcer this season. Dave Denton will be calling the games and Brooks Hansen will be the on-field MC during each game.

- There will be a Harley motorcycle rally before the homecoming game against Colorado State.

- Some of the Aggie home games will have a special significance this season — the Boise State game is the cancer awareness game, Nevada is military appreciation, Wyoming is Parent and Family Weekend and will have a Halloween celebration and the Colorado State game will be the white-out game.

—thomas.sorenson@aggiemail.usu.edu
Twitter: @tomcat340

10 MOSTLY MUNDANE FACTS

1. Utah State is one of just four Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) programs to win 30-plus games and record three bowl victories in the past three years joining Clemson, Michigan State and Oregon.

2. Utah State has won 35 of its last 47 games (.745) and those 35 wins are the third-most in the West over the last four years behind Oregon (41) and Boise State (36).

3. Utah State is one of just five FBS schools with a Graduation Success Rate (GSR) above 80 percent, while averaging 10 wins a season from 2012-14 along with Central Florida, Northern Illinois, Notre Dame and Stanford.

4. The USU defense was the fourth best team in the country in getting to the quarterback last season. The Aggies averaged 3.57 sacks per game, trailing only Utah, Washington and Virginia Tech in that category.

5. Utah State currently has 16 players on NFL rosters and has had eight players drafted into the NFL in the past five years.

6. Wells, who is the 17th-youngest head coach at the Football Bowl Subdivision level and one of just 14 coaches to lead his alma mater, is just the second Utah State graduate to be appointed its head football coach joining Chris Pella, who graduated from USU in 1965 and coached the Aggies from 1983-85.

7. Junior LB Nick Vigil was voted as the 10th-most versatile FBS athlete in the nation by NFL.com heading into the 2015 season. Last season, Vigil was tied for seventh in the nation in forced fumbles, 29th for tackles and 30th in tackles for loss, all while gaining 152 rushing yards and scoring three touchdowns on offense.

8. There are nine Division I schools that are located in cities with an elevation of at least 4,000 feet above sea level and Utah State ranks sixth on the list with an elevation of 4,710 feet. USU is the fifth-highest Mountain West Conference school. This season the Aggies will play at three other locations on the list (Air Force, New Mexico and Utah), giving USU nine games this season at 4,000 feet above sea level.

9. Senior QB Chuckie Keeton is listed as the Aggies' starting quarterback heading into the 2015 season and if he starts the season opener against Southern Utah he would be one of just two FBS quarterbacks to ever start five season openers along with Tulsa's T.J. Rubley (1987-91).

10. Keeton is also the second-winningest QB in school history with 19 wins, trailing Tony Adams (1970-72), who won 22 games and ahead of John Pappas (1966-68), who won 18 games.



Kyle Fackrell
Photo courtesy of Mountain West

NEW PLAYERS TO WATCH

BY **Thomas Sorenson** | SENIOR WRITER

Each season, the makeup of a college football roster adjusts with the ebb and flow of players leaving and joining the team. Inevitably, the team is left with holes in the starting lineup.

Here are some of the new faces and returning players who are expected to make an impact for the Utah State Aggies in 2015:

GEROLD BRIGHT - Bright was an all-around player in high school, scoring 46 touchdowns rushing and receiving/throwing another 10 touchdowns in his last two years in high school. At 5'9", 180 lbs he's small, but lightning quick. Bright, who also received offers from Tennessee and South Florida, will be a threat all season long.

BEN WYSOCKI - Wysocki has one year of eligibility left after transferring from UCLA to finish grad school at Utah State. He has an opportunity to fill in on the offensive line, with sophomore guard Tyshon Mosley

also being suspended for the first two games of the season. Wysocki will add more depth to the line, and his experience on special teams will be a welcome addition to the team.

DEVANTE MAYS - A 225-pound power back, Mays comes to Utah State via Blinn College. He'll provide a much different look for opposing defenses than the speedy LaJuan Hunt, but with 557 rushing yards on 57 carries (5.8 yards per carry) in his time at Blinn, Mays has shown that he can outrun a defense, too.

JUDE HOCKEL - Hockel is a junior college transfer who, like Wysocki, is expected to fill out the offensive line depth for the Aggies. He previously played at Diablo Valley Community College in California.

ETHAN CORTAZZO - One of the more interesting newcomers to the team, Cortazzo is a preferred walk-on after playing at Mesa Community College in Arizona. In spite of his walk-on status, Cortazzo has impressed at camp, and was even named the Newcomer of the Day on August 7th. With

the wide receiving depth in front of him in flux, Cortazzo has the chance to get some playing time this season.

PROMISE AMADI - The senior cornerback started fall camp with a diving interception in the first practice and finished with three pass breakups in the final scrimmage. Amadi is a transfer player from Boise State and has been a consistent producer throughout fall camp. He could be an important part of the rotation for the Aggie defense in 2015.

DAVID MOALA - While Moala made an appearance in 11 games last season, he will have a much larger role in 2015. He is expected to start in place of Travis Seefeldt, who will likely miss the entire season from injuries sustained in a car crash this past summer. At 6-foot-2 and 300 pounds, Moala provides a big presence in the middle of the defensive line.

—thomas.sorenson@aggiemail.usu.edu
twitter: @tomcat340



parade®

Make it Special, Make it Jerrick's

Jerrick's Fine Jewelry
(435) 753-9755
930 N Main • Logan, Ut.



\$5 OFF ANY HAT

Limit 1 Per Coupon
Per Customer

Expires 10/1/15

NORTH
1430 N MAIN
SUITE 130
10 AM - 7 PM
MON - SAT

SOUTH
42 S MAIN
10 AM - 6 PM
MON - SAT

LOCKER 42

Online @
locker42.com

Follow Us:
f i t

YOUR SOURCE FOR AGGIE APPAREL

OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Eric Berntson | DE
Siua Taufa | DE
Ian Togiai | DE
Gasetoto Schuster | NG
Edmund Faimalo | NG
Anthony Williams | LB
Brock Carman | LB
Michael Okonkwo | LB

Alex Huerta | LB
Marquan Ellison | CB
Danny Gray | CB
Tyler Floyd | CB
BJ Hayes | CB
Jontrell Rocquemore | FS
Myron Turner | SS
Aaron Wade | SS

Devin Centers
FS | Jr. — No. 37



LT Filiaga
ILB | Sr. — No. 5



Torrey Green
OLB | Sr. — No. 39



Jalen Davis
CB | So. — No. 13



Ricky Ali'ifua
DE | Jr. — No. 95



David Moala
NG | Sr. — No. 51



Hunter Sharp
WR | Sr. — No. 4



Wyatt Houston
TE | Jr. — No. 83



Austin Albrecht
LT | Jr. — No. 65



Tyshawn Mosely
LG | So. — No. 72



Austin Stephens
C | Jr. — No. 59

OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Braelon Roberts | WR
Tyler Fox | WR
Jaren Colston-Green | WR
Kennedy Williams | RB
Devante Mays | RB
Tonny Lindsey | RB
Justen Hervey | RB

Kent Myers | QB
KJ Uluave | LT
Ben Wysocki | LG
Jarom Ialone | C
Preston Brooksby | RT
Dax Raymond | TE
Landon Horne | TE



LaJuan Hunt
RB | So. — No. 21



Chuckie Keeton
QB | Sr. — No. 16

Marwin Evans
SS | Sr. — No. 24



Salanoa Galea'i
LS | Sr. — No. 58



Jake Thompson
K | Jr. — No. 36



Brock Warren
K | Jr. — No. 63



Aaron Dalton
P | Fr. — No. 89

SPECIALISTS

Nick Vigil
ILB | Jr. — No. 41



Kyler Fackrell
OLB | Sr. — No. 9



Jordan Nielsen
DE | Sr. — No. 97



Deshane Hines
CB | Sr. — No. 17



Taani Fisilau
RG | Sr. — No. 75



Jake Simonich
LG | Jr. — No. 76



Andrew Rodriguez
WR | Jr. — No. 82



Brandon Swindall
WR | Sr. No. 11

OR



Devonte Robinson
WR | Sr. — No. 3

QUARTERBACKS



Chuckie Keeton passes.
Kylee Larsen photo

There's good news and bad news at the quarterback position for Aggie fans.

The bad news is mid-season hero, Darrel Garretson, is no longer with the team. He transferred, leaving a hole in the depth chart. Garretson

passed for over 1,000 yards, eight touchdowns and only three interceptions with a completion percentage over 67 percent.

The good news for fans is that Chuckie Keeton was granted a fifth year of eligibil-

ity from the NCAA and is finally healthy. Keeton looks to be back to his old self and participated in a full offseason of spring football and fall camp.

With Keeton in the backfield USU's offense could get a much needed spark from where it left off last season. He is the school's career completion percentage leader, as well as third in passing yards, third in total offense and second in passing touchdowns.

Behind Keeton on the depth chart, things get more complicated. Kent Myers, now a sophomore, came in as the No. 4 option at QB last season and showed flashes of brilliance. He won six of seven games that he played in while accounting for over 1,000 yards of total offense and 10 total touchdowns. Myers is now listed at No. 2 on the depth chart, a big jump from where he started

last season.

After Myers comes Oregon Duck transfer Damion Hobbs. After sitting his transfer year last year, the 6-foot-2 Hobbs has looked strong and fast in spring and fall football. Although Myers is listed as number two, Hobbs took the majority of the reps with the second team offense in the spring, before moving back a spot to third string in the fall.

In the fourth spot, which in USU's case is actually relevant to discuss, is DJ Nelson. Nelson is a local product from Logan who sat out last season as a redshirt. He's got a small frame at 5-foot-9 and a generous listing at 200 pounds, but he plays big. Nelson isn't going to be the most gifted athlete on the field but he competes and finds a way to win.

So if Keeton can't stay healthy for a full season, the Aggies have options at backup quarterback.



Kent Myers
Kelsie Lott photo

RUNNING BACKS

After a lackluster season from the Utah State run game in 2014 the Aggies have re-loaded with a few new weapons and return one of the top rushers in LaJuan Hunt.

As a freshman he carried the ball 111 times for a 4.9 yard per carry average. Joining Hunt in the backfield are JUCO transfers Tony Lindsey and Devante Mays. Justin Hervey is a redshirt freshman eligible to play after sitting out his freshman year. Lindsey, Mays, Hervey and Hunt have



LaJuan Hunt
Kylee Larsen photo

all looked good during fall football, but it remains to be seen what the coaching staff will do.

It looks as if USU will go

with a running back by committee approach and ride the hot hand of whoever is running well. Each back has his own running style and will

be used in different situations.

Mays is a pounder at 5-foot-11 and 225 pounds he will likely be called upon in short yardage situations. Hervey has extreme speed and can score from anywhere once he has the ball in his hands. Lindsey is a quick back that is fast and explosive out of cuts. Hunt showed flashes of speed and power, as well as good pass

catching last season. He is also experienced in blocking, making him a great passing-down back.

DAILY SPECIALS

MONDAY

\$3.00 SMALL PEPPERONI PIZZA

TUESDAY

KIDS EAT FREE
(ASK SERVER FOR DETAILS)

WEDNESDAY

ONE TOPPING PASTA \$3.00

THURSDAY

2 FOR \$2.00 PERSONAL FH'ZOOKIES

FRIDAY

FREE LUNCH FRIDAY
(ASK SERVER FOR DETAILS)

STUDENT DISCOUNT 10% WITH ID
MAY USE ANYTIME
(NOT VALID WITH DAILY SPECIALS)

682 SOUTH MAIN STREET, LOGAN, UT 84321

firehouse
p i z z e r i o



OFFENSIVE LINE & DEFENSIVE LINE

Utah State has four linemen that started in 2014 coming back to the team. Jake Simonich, Taani Fisilau, Austin Stephens and Tyshon Mosley are all returning and should have a starting spot.

Besides the four returning starters, there's not a lot of experience on the line — it's mostly young players. The exception is Ben Wysocki.

Wysocki, a graduate transfer from UCLA, is a big addition to the O-line for USU. He brings four years of playing experience and is very versatile. Coach Josh Heupel confirmed Wysocki as a starter and said the team may move him around on the line to help add depth at the other positions.

There are only two senior linemen on the Aggie roster, in total there are more freshman and sophomores put together than juniors and seniors.



Kylee Larsen photo



Kylee Larsen photo

A preseason injury to starting nose guard Travis Seefeldt and losing BJ Larsen are big hits to the defensive line for the Aggies.

Senior David Moala will start at nose guard and at 6-foot-2 300 pounds, he looks the part of starter. Redshirt freshman Gasetoto Schuster and Clark Jeppesen are battling to backup Moala.

Jordan Nielsen, a senior, is the lone returning starter for USU and he will anchor the line from the defensive end position.

Ricky Ali'ifua had a spectacular showing in spring and fall ball and will start opposite Nielsen. Adding depth to the DE position will be senior John Taylor and junior Edmund Fiamalo. Fiamalo and Taylor will play behind Nielsen.

Ian Togiai, a sophomore who played linebacker last season, and junior Slua Taufua will backup Ali'ifua. The front three for Utah State brings in many unfamiliar faces and new names, but should be ready to roll once the season begins.

WIDE RECEIVERS

The season starts with Utah State missing its leading receiver from last season.

Hunter Sharp, who had over 900 yards and seven touchdowns last year, is suspended for the first two games of the 2015 campaign for a violation of team rules. Once he's back, the senior wide receiver will be depended on as the default No. 1 option on nearly every play.

In Sharp's absence, Devonte Robinson will get a lot of looks. Robinson transferred from West Virginia after 2012, and will be playing his final year for Utah State this season. Robinson is a long-striding, 6-foot-3 receiver. He'll get lots of minutes in the first two games and probably sub in often during the rest of the season.

Lining up opposite of Sharp will be Brandon Swindall, who missed most of last season due to injury but is back healthy for his senior year. At 6-foot-4 he's a big target that could help the Ag-

gies score in the red zone by catching jump balls. Swindall combines his size with above-average speed that makes him an excellent option for deep routes down the sideline or in the middle of the field.

Other options at WR for USU include Braelon Roberts, another 6' 3" big-body receiver option, Andrew Rodriguez, Gerold Bright, Tyler Fox, Zach Van Leeuwen and Chad Artist.

Watch for a newcomer to step up as the top slot-receiver option for Keeton since playmaker JoJo Natson has been kicked off the team due to a violation of rules.

At the tight end position USU returns starter Wyatt Houston and brings on a junior college transfer Chris Copier. Landon Horne will also return adding depth to a talented group of tight ends. All three are big, strong and have soft hands to catch passes down the seam.



Kylee Larsen photo

SAVE TIME
Shop ONLINE

Lee's ONLINE
— Rosie

Meet Your New BFF!

First Grocery Delivery is FREE!
Up to 3 miles from store location

Promo code:
delivery15

Sign up at
leesmarketplace.com

ONLINE OR DELIVERY

LINEBACKERS



Kylee Larsen photo

Linebacker is arguably the deepest and best position for Utah State.

USU lost a key component in

middle linebacker Zach Vigil, however, they get back Kyler Fackrell, Nick Vigil, LT Filiaga and Torrey Green. All four

were in and out of games last season with injuries and Fackrell missed nearly every game.

With the linebacking corps

healthy it should be USU's best unit. Behind the starting unit there are four more seniors that help bring leadership and experience to the squad. There are also four freshman linebackers that will learn a lot from some of the best this season.

In the 2014 preseason, Fackrell was named the No. 1 college linebacker by Mel Kiper Jr. After sitting out last year, a healthy Fackrell can will help to complete the four-linebacker scheme run by the Aggies.

Nick Vigil can't be stopped. He has great lateral movement on the field and good vision to shoot the gap and shed blockers between linemen so he can stop the play before it starts. Keep an eye out for No. 41 to be making plays all over, in the backfield and the secondary.



**Need
someone
who speaks
fluent
insurance?**

I can help you get the right coverage at the right price.

Don't pay for unnecessary extras. I'm here to help make sure you understand your options so you can choose the right coverage without getting lost in translation.

Get to a better State®.

Get State Farm®.

CALL ME TODAY.

Lana Powell Insurance Agcy Inc

Lana Powell, Agent
550 North Main Street
Logan, UT 84321
Bus: 435-752-7639



SECONDARY & SPECIAL TEAMS



Photo Courtesy of USU Athletics

The back four took a big hit by graduating Brian Suite, Frankie Sutura, Rashard Stewart and La'Ron Bennett. This season the secondary will be led by junior free safety Devin Centers and sophomore cornerback Jalen Davis.

Davis was selected as a freshman All-American last season and has hopes to do even better this season. Playing opposite Davis is De-shane Hines. Hines, a senior, played in every game last season and had two interceptions.

Daniel Gray and Bryant Hayes are in line to back up Davis, Hayes must sit out the first two games due to a violation of team rules. On the other side Tyler Floyd is listed as the No. 2 on the depth chart.

At strong safety senior Marwin Evans is penciled in as the starter, however, redshirt freshman Jontrell Rocquemore is giving him some competition.

The bottom line for the secondary is this: if someone isn't playing particularly well, the coaches have a lot of options and depth behind them. Fans may see a combination of many different players in the secondary depending upon what offense USU is facing.

USU field goal kicking has been anything but special the last few seasons, the Aggies struggled to make any attempt outside of 35 yards. Kickers Jake Thompson and Brock Warren are hoping to see that change this year.

Thompson played last season and was 0-for-4 on his attempts. He does, however, have a strong leg and will handle kickoff duties. Warren didn't play last season but has performed well in fall camp. Coaches have yet to decide which will kick field goals this year.

As punter, Jaron Bentrude averaged over 40 yards per kick as a senior in 2014. His replacement, Arron Dalton looks to continue the tradition of deep punts. Dalton has looked good in spring and fall football kicking. At 6-foot-4 and 220 pounds, Dalton has a strong leg and can boom his punts high and far.

The Aggies lost their top-tier return man JoJo Natson, who was kicked off the team due to a violation of rules. Hunter Sharp and Kennedy Williams figure to take over as return specialists. Jalen Davis will return punts.

One person can't replace all that Natson did for the Aggies. A whole host of wide receivers and running backs will cycle into the return game.



Ryan Costanzo photo



ALL EYES ON KEETON

BY **Logan Jones**
STAFF WRITER

He'll be the first to tell you it's a team sport. That it's not about him. That no one player is solely responsible for the team's success — even if that player is the starting quarterback. He'll regularly ignore standard signing etiquette, happily autographing footballs for kids anywhere except near the laces, where the names of prominent players are supposed to go.

He preaches the team-first mentality so convincingly, believes in it so genuinely, it's often difficult to remember that in this rare instance, it really is all about him.

This year is about Chuckie Keeton.

Keeton doesn't need to line his locker with press clippings to have confidence in himself, and he certainly has no use for statistics. His focus in his fifth and final year of eligibility is dead set on the one accolade that has thus eluded Utah State's tal-

ented squad — a Mountain West championship.

Of course, for the thrice-injured playmaker, the road to a conference title is one walked with baby steps.

"It's been a long time since I've worn my pants," Keeton noted at the annual end-of-summer Mountain West media frenzy. "Jersey, you wear that every time. But pants, that's different."

Keeton was last spotted in full uniform limping off the field in the middle of a game against Wake Forest.

Even the most optimistic fans knew caution was being taken, that perhaps Keeton — not yet at full strength after shredding his knee against BYU in 2013 — needed just a little more time to get healthy.

All such hopes were shot the second Keeton was spotted roaming the sidelines sans pads, aided by a pair of crutches he obviously loathed. Thus began a seemingly endless cycle of worn-out liga-

see **Keeton** page 16



Chuckie Keeton
Photo courtesy of Mountain West

"Freshman year, we worried about getting to a bowl game. And I think that's a big difference in our athletics now. The standard we set for ourselves continues to be raised."

-Chuckie Keeton



Chuckie Keeton
Kylee Larsen photo

Keeton

from PAGE 14

ments and broken bones for anyone who dared take Utah State's starting quarterback position.

Aggie fans enjoyed five games of solid play from backup Darell Garretson, who notably unleashed his cannon of an arm on in-state rival BYU's secondary before suffering a broken wrist against CSU.

Then it was Craig Harrison's turn — he made it through all of three quarters against UNLV before a monster hit sidelined him with a knee injury.

By the first week of November, what was supposed to be Keeton's final season somehow led to true freshman Kent Myers taking over the starting role against Hawai'i — and scorching the Rainbow Warriors for 186 yards and three touchdowns on 14-of-15 passing.

"Myers mania" was born, and a fourth-string quarterback was as widely celebrated in Logan as anyone on the team — safe to say nobody saw that coming.

After all that madness, Keeton returns for an incredibly rare fifth season as an opening day starter — a position he's held since before head coach Matt Wells first took over.

"I think he really relishes his last and final opportunity," Wells said. "Sometimes when you get things taken away from you, I think you cherish things a little harder."

Though Keeton's skill as a player and his charm as a person make it difficult to address any seeds of doubt welling up inside, there remains a subtle, familiar feeling as Keeton gears up for one more

go-around.

He says he's healthy. He certainly looks healthy. He even has a much improved weight lifting regimen to prove he's far more prepared than he was last year.

"This past year was a lesser injury, so I didn't have to start at ground zero," Keeton said. "I've been able to squat this year, which is a big difference between this year and the year before."

But the USU faithful have been down this road before. The Auburn game that marked Keeton's arrival on the college football scene seems so long ago. Much has happened since then — bowl victories, changes to the coaching staff and a jump to a better conference, to name a few. Nobody can deny Keeton played a role in ushering in this new era of consistently good — sometimes great — Aggie football teams, and he even notes the difference in the program's attitude since he first arrived.

"Freshman year, we worried about getting to a bowl game," Keeton said. "And I think that's a big difference in our athletics now. The standard we set for ourselves continues to be raised."

However, after elevating USU's football program to new heights his freshman year, Keeton hasn't quite gotten the chance to finish what he started.

"We always have the goal to win a conference championship because that's something we can control," Keeton said. "The second one is to win a bowl game. The last one is to win the state. If I throw for 200 yards and we do all three of those things? Big year."

That's what a fully healthy Keeton can bring to the table. As impressive as

Myers and Garretson were, the Aggies crumbled in Boise last fall and couldn't capture the conference title game the year before. The team was missing the guy who made those dreams of bowl wins and conference titles possibilities to begin with. Now with all manner of preseason praise in his wake, Keeton is ready to put the hype behind him and take a run at the Mountain West crown.

"It's cool to get every single preseason award, but how I see it, that's like a glorified prediction," Keeton said. "A lot of other players didn't have the preseason heisman, like a

lot of people didn't know who Johnny Manziel was before the season — now I'm from Texas so I knew, but you just want to build as you go. You want your resume to speak for you."

Specifically addressing the movement around Cache Valley suggesting Keeton is a darkhorse heisman candidate, the fifth-year senior responded pretty much exactly how you'd expect from a guy who shies away from the spotlight.

"It's nice, I appreciate everything the school has done for me with the heisman thing," Keeton said. "It's nice to kind of dial it back a little

bit because I'd rather show it than have anything said about it."

He'll certainly have a chance to show it throughout the Aggies' 2015 campaign, as USU plays host to CSU, BYU, Air Force and defending conference champs Boise State. Boise, the Mountain West's perennial heavyweight, has never faced a Keeton-led Aggie squad.

"I'm sure most people think staying healthy is my main goal, but that's not really on my mind. That's just kind of a given," Keeton said. "I don't want any stat line or anything like that. As long

as we win a Mountain West Championship, I'm cool. We don't have that ring or that trophy yet, so that'll be nice to get. I held onto the trophy at media day and it like, molded to my hand for a second. Hopefully we can get that back here."

"He's everything to Utah State," Wells added. "But also, if you listen to him, he'll tell you everything Utah State has done for him."

—*logantjones@aggiemail.usu.edu*
twitter: @logantj



Chuckie Keeton
Kylee Larsen photo



Chuckie Keeton goes down with an injury against BYU in 2013
Statesman file photo

NEXT MAN DOWN

USU suffered a plague of injuries over the past two seasons and has combated them with three words. 'Next man up'

BY **Jeffrey Dahdah**
CO-MANAGING EDITOR

It's a common phrase in sports — next man up.

It's a phrase that has been recited over and over by the Utah State football players and coaches the last two years. The phrase, though cliché, kept the Aggies psyche up through the onslaught of injuries last season.

When a string of bad luck saw multiple starters go down with injuries last season, the Aggies were forced to dip in to their third, and in some cases fourth, string. Yet they managed to take the injuries in stride as they finished with a 10-4 record and recorded the program's fourth ever bowl

win.

Chuckie Keeton will start his fifth season opener as quarterback this month. He was the first of three quarterbacks to go down with a season-ending injury last year. Keeton is no stranger to the phrase "next man up." In fact, he credits the success of the team to it.

"Everyone tries to prepare like they're starter," Keeton said. "That's a big thing just so if that scenario ever does come up, which it did, the next guy is ready to go."

For Keeton, last season was his third at USU cut short by an injury. As a team leader, he said he did feel some responsibility to handle it well.

"Everyone's always going to

be looking at me at one point or another, and I just had to try and put on of my best happy face or comfort face, but deep down, I mean, of course I was hurting," he said. "It was hard for me to jog off the field, I guess I'd try and suck it up for the rest of the guys."

Keeton wasn't the only leader to go down with an injury last season. Alex Huerta suffered a season-ending injury before the season started, Tyler Fackrell in the first game, Brandon Swindall in the second and a host of other key injuries following including second string linebackers, running backs and the second and third string quarterbacks.

From the outside perspec-

tive, the 2014 season felt like "next man down" instead of "next man up." However, that was scarcely felt by the players.

"I definitely don't think we were looking for it. I think it's just a result of playing hard," Fackrell said.

However, that doesn't mean that every injury was easy to process. Brandon Schulz spends his season training every player with individual plans. As the strength and conditioning coach, he said that he struggles with all of the injuries himself.

"It weighs very heavily. The person that's probably the best at dealing with that is my wife. She knows how painful it is, how much time you put

in. There are even times when coach [Matt] Wells is talking me off a ledge a little bit," he said. "I definitely take it extremely hard, because these kids are everything for me."

For the players, an injury in the fall

// Just sitting out. It really shows you how much you love the game, how much you miss it, how much you need it, —Brandon Swindall //

means a complete change in lifestyle.

"Just sitting out. It really shows you how much you love the game, how much you miss it, how much you need it," Swindall said.

Swindall also said the abnormality of sitting out gave him more motivation to get healthy.

"Looking back, I was like, 'wow I need football in my life,' so I pushed myself as hard as I could in rehab to get back to a hundred percent," he said.

Schulz said that the emotions from an injury come from feeling bad for the person, not necessarily what they do for the team. From a competitive standpoint, Schulz said that they are prepared.

"I don't think it did much to the team. I mean we train these guys mentally so they understand it's the next guy up," he said. "You know, the the reason you feel bad is you feel bad for the kid."

The idea of "next man up" has become an integral part of the program.

"We've developed a system here where every kid knows that it could be your time," Schulz said.

It's system that has been tested and proven to work for the Aggies. Any player would chant the phrase "next man up" when addressed about the high volume of injuries.

Given the success of the re-enforcement's, it's a compelling chant.

—dahdahjm@gmail.com
twitter: @dahdahjeff

Brandon Swindall
Kylee Larsen photo



SOUTHERN UTAH » SEPT. 3



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 3-9

USU leads series, 3-0

Conference: Big Sky

TV: none

Head Coach: Ed Lamb

Kickoff: 7 p.m.

SUU will be glad to have quarterback Ammon Olsen under center for his senior season. Olsen, who threw for 3,049 yards and 21 touchdowns last year, will return alongside 12 other veteran Thunderbirds aiming to improve on 2014's 3-9 campaign.

Critical to SUU's success this season will be senior defensive end

James Cowser, who anchored the T-birds' defense last year with 11.5 sacks and a conference-record 28.5 tackles for loss. Cowser has been listed on the Big Sky's Preseason All-Conference team.

The Thunderbirds struggled to get any semblance of a running game going last season, hurting the team's

short yardage situations and ability to manage the clock. The team will lean on senior running back Malik Brown to produce more than his 31 rushing yards per game last year. The Las Vegas native played in all 12 of the Thunderbirds' games in 2014, totalling 375 yards on 103 carries.



Photos courtesy of SUU Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Ammon Olsen, QB
James Cowser, DE
Miles Killebrew, DB

KEY DEPARTURES

Malik Brown, RB
Chris Robinson, WR
Chinedu Ahanonu, DB

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

at Nevada	L	19-28
at SE Louisiana	L	14-41
S. Dakota St.	L	6-26
at Fresno St.	L	16-56
Weber St.	W	31-28
at Cal Poly	L	39-42
Eastern Wash.	L	30-42
at Idaho State	L	28-56
North Dakota	W	35-17
at Sacramento St.	L	21-42
Montana	L	17-35
at Northern Ariz.	W	22-14

AT UTAH » SEPT. 11



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 9-4

USU trails series, 29-78-2

Conference: Pac-12

TV: ESPN2

Head Coach: Kyle Wittingham

Kickoff: 7 p.m.



Utah is looking to make the jump from good to great in the PAC-12 conference after posting its first winning conference record since departing the Mountain West. The Utes lost both their offensive and defensive coordinators in the offseason, as well as the anchor of one of the country's most brutal pass-rushes. Nate Orchard, who recorded 18.5 sacks in his final season

at Utah, propelled the Ute defense to an NCAA-best 55 sacks in 2014. Utah's defensive philosophy remains the same, but this time around all eyes will be on returning defensive end Hunter Dimick.

Senior quarterback Travis Wilson and last year's breakout star running back Devontae Booker both return to power the Utes' offense. Booker, a junior college trans-

fer who totalled 1,512 yards on the ground last season, fell just seven yards short of Utah's single-season rushing record.

Wilson's favorite target, wideout Kenneth Scott, will bring some veteran leadership to a fairly inexperienced receiving corps. Scott caught 48 passes last year, including a clutch game-winner against Stanford.

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

Idaho State	W	56-14	
Fresno State	W	59-27	
at Michigan	W	26-10	
vs Washington St.	L	27-28	
at UCLA	W	30-28	
at Oregon State	W	29-23	OT
USC	W	24-21	
at Arizona St.	L	16-19	OT
Oregon	L	27-51	
at Stanford	W	20-17	
Arizona	L	10-42	
at Colorado	W	38-34	
Colorado State	W	45-10	



Photos courtesy of Utah Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Devontae Booker, RB
Hunter Dimick, DE
Andy Phillips, K

KEY DEPARTURES

Nate Orchard, DE
Eric Rowe, CB
Dres Anderson, WR

AT WASHINGTON » SEPT. 19



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 8-6

Conference: Pac-12

Head Coach: Chris Peterson

USU trails series, 0-2

TV: Pac-12 network

Kickoff: 3 p.m.

By looking only at the record, the Huskies had an average season in 2014. The team went 8-6 with a loss to Oklahoma State in the TicketCity Cactus Bowl to end the year.

However, when you look at the five regular season losses, each one was a loss to a top-20 team and one came from No. 9 Oregon. The level of competition in the Pac-12 Conference is much fiercer than in

the Mountain West.

Cyler Miles, the starting quarterback for the Huskies, won't be back for another season due to chronic hip problems, and Washington has yet to name its starting QB for 2015.

The Huskies also lost their own version of Nick Vigil, as third leading rusher and tackler Shaq Thompson is now in the NFL. Thompson tallied 456 yards and two

touchdowns on the ground, while also racking up 81 tackles, seven sacks and forcing three fumbles.

Washington head man Chris Petersen, formerly the coach of Boise State, is a familiar face on the opposing sideline. Utah State and Petersen have met before, and he is currently unbeaten against the Aggies.



Photos courtesy of Washington Athletics

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

at Hawaii	W	17-16
Eastern Washington	W	59-52
Illinois	W	44-19
Georgia St.	W	45-14
Stanford	L	13-20
at California	W	31-7
at Oregon	L	20-45
Arizona St.	L	10-24
at Colorado	W	38-23
UCLA	L	30-44
at Arizona	L	26-27
Oregon St.	W	37-13
at Washington St.	W	31-13
Oklahoma St.	L	22-30

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Jaydon Mickens, WR
Dante Pettis, RB
Dwayne Washington, RB

KEY DEPARTURES

Shaq Thompson, RB/LB
Cyler Miles, DL
Evan Hudson, DL

COLORADO STATE » OCT. 03



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 10-3

USU trails series, 32-37-2

Conference: MW (Mtn.)

TV: ESPN Networks

Head Coach: Mike Bobo

Kickoff: TBA

The Rams enter the season with a pair of sizeable question marks hanging over them — how will first-year head coach Mike Bobo perform, and what can he do to make up for 2014 MW offensive player of the year Garrett Grayson's departure?

Grayson racked up 4,006 passing yards and 32 touchdowns through the air last year, good enough to rank 8th in the nation in passing offense. Redshirt sophomore Nick Stevens will step into a leading

role this year and attempt to maintain CSU's vicious passing attack.

The unproven Stevens will enjoy throwing to to one of the conference's most dangerous receiving corps, highlighted by All-American junior wideout Rashard Higgins.

Higgins led the NCAA with 1,750 receiving yards and 17 touchdowns. Higgins will undoubtedly draw special attention from opposing defenses, opening up

CSU's offense for other receiving threats, including fellow wideout Joe Hansley and talented tight end Steven Walker.

The Rams' defense will enjoy the presence of several returning veterans, including three on the defensive line and veteran safety Trent Matthews. CSU ranked 4th against the pass and 7th against the run in the Mountain West last year.

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

Colorado	W	31-17
at Boise St.	L	24-37
UC Davis	W	49-21
at Boston College	W	24-21
Tulsa	W	42-17
at Nevada	W	16-13
Utah State	W	45-31
Wyoming	W	38-31
at San Jose St.	W	49-20
Hawaii	W	58-20
New Mexico	W	27-24
at Air Force	L	24-27
vs Utah	L	10-45



Photos courtesy of CSU Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Rashard Higgins, WR
Cory James, LB
Steven Walker, TE

KEY DEPARTURES

Garrett Grayson, QB
Dee Hart, RB
Max Morgan, LB **23**

AT FRESNO STATE » OCT. 10



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 6-7

Conference: MW (West)

Head Coach: Tim DeRuyter

USU trails series, 10-17-1

TV: CBSSN

Kickoff: 8:30 p.m.

After tying San Diego State for a share of the West Division title last year, the Bulldogs look to be in rebuilding mode this season. The last of former head coach Pat Hill's recruits are nearing graduation, and with defensive stars Tyeler Davison

and Derron Smith lost to the NFL draft the Bulldogs' porous secondary needs a serious upgrade. Fresno allowed touchdowns of 20 yards or more 15 times last year.

Fresno will lean heavily on running back Marteze Waller and tight

end Chad Olsen to provide some stability to the offense. Sophomore Zack Greenlee will have to adjust to his new starting role quickly for the Bulldogs to compete with San Diego State for the west division.



Photos courtesy of Fresno State Athletics

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

at USC	L	13-52	
at Utah	L	27-59	
Nebraska	L	19-55	
Southern Utah	W	56-16	
at New Mexico	W	35-24	
San Diego St.	W	24-13	
at UNLV	L	27-30	OT
at Boise St.	L	27-37	
Wyoming	L	17-45	
San Jose St.	W	38-24	
at Nevada	W	40-20	
Hawaii	W	28-21	
at Boise St.	L	14-28	
Rice	L	6-30	

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Marteze Waller, RB
Chad Olsen, TE
Charles Washington, CB

KEY DEPARTURES

Tyeler Davison, DT
Darron Smith, S
Josh Harper, WR

BOISE STATE » OCT. 17



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 12-2

USU trails series, 4-15

Conference: MW (Mtn.)

TV: CBSSN

Head Coach: Bryan Harsin

Kickoff: 7 p.m.



Expectations for Boise State are high, as nearly all key starters from last season's conference champions return — nearly. The Broncos offensive line remains intact, as well as most of their receiving corps and several defensive captains. However, running back Jay Ajayi and quarterback Grant Hedrick are gone, and won't be easily replaced.

Together, Hedrick and Ajayi accounted for 89 percent of BSU's offense last year. Hedrick owned the NCAA's best completion percentage in 2014 (70.8), passing for 3,696 yards and 23 touchdowns. Ajayi found the end zone 28 times while ranking second nationally in yards from scrimmage.

The new man under center will likely be sophomore Ryan Finley, who threw two touchdowns late in Boise's disaster of a game against Air Force. He'll have a tal-

ented group of veteran wideouts at his disposal, including triple-threat athlete Shane Williams-Rhodes. The senior led the Broncos last season with 68 receptions, seven touchdowns and 179 rushing yards — all while acting as BSU's key return man, averaging 8.5 yards per punt return.

Boise's defense will feature three seniors on the defensive line, as well as 2014 team leader in tackles Tanner Vallejo at linebacker. With eight total returning defensive starters, the Broncos have earned the No. 22 spot on Lindy's preseason top 25 rankings.

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

at Ole Miss	L	13-35
Colorado St.	W	37-24
at Connecticut	W	38-21
Louisiana	W	34-9
at Air Force	L	14-28
at Nevada	W	51-46
Fresno St.	W	37-27
BYU	W	55-30
at New Mexico	W	60-49
San Diego St.	W	38-29
at Wyoming	W	63-14
Utah St.	W	50-19
Fresno St.	W	28-14
Arizona	W	38-30



Photos courtesy of BSU Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Darian Thompson, S
Thomas Sperbeck, WR
Kamalei Correa, DE

KEY DEPARTURES

Jay Ajayi, RB
Grant Hedrick, QB
Beau Martin, DE

AT SAN DIEGO STATE » OCT. 23



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 7-6

USU trails series, 1-10

Conference: MW (West)

TV: ESPN2

Head Coach: Rocky Long

Kickoff: 8:30 p.m.

Donnel Pumphrey returns after a monster 1,867-yard 2014 campaign. The 5-foot-9, 170-pound running back ran in 20 touchdowns last year, and with the help of eight returning defensive starters should push the Aztecs toward a MW title run.

SDSU expects Kentucky transfer Maxwell Smith to handle an offense with few standout receiving options, and to remain healthy after suffering shoulder and ankle injuries.

The Aztecs' secondary is a mystery. SDSU's defense ranked 10th na-

tionally against the pass last season, while also allowing 15 touchdown passes of 20 yards or more. Three starting safeties return to the Aztecs' fall lineup, as well as fifth-year senior corner J.J. Whittaker.



Photos courtesy of SDSU Athletics

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

Northern Arizona	W	38-7
at North Carolina	L	27-31
at Oregon St.	L	7-28
UNLV	W	34-17
at Fresno St.	L	13-24
at New Mexico	W	24-14
vs Hawaii	W	20-10
at Nevada	L	14-30
vs Idaho	W	35-21
at Boise St.	L	29-38
Air Force	W	30-14
San Jose St.	W	38-7
Navy	L	16-17

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Donnel Pumphrey, RB
J.J. Whittaker, CB
Jon Sanchez, DE

KEY DEPARTURES

Cody Galea, LB
Derek Largent, LB
Ezell Ruffin, WR

WYOMING » OCT. 30



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 4-8

USU leads series, 37-24-4

Conference: MW (Mtn.)

TV: ESPN2

Head Coach: Craig Bohl

Kickoff: 8:15 p.m.



To say the Cowboys lack experience on defense is a profound understatement. Wyoming looks set to start four freshmen in the secondary, and just one returning starter at linebacker. Two-time all-conference defensive end Eddie Yarbrough returns to terrorize opposing quarterbacks for one last season, and

sophomore corner Robert Priester could return to a starting role when fully healed from an injury suffered in the spring.

Offensively, the Pokes are in much better shape. The one-two punch of running backs Shaun Wick and Brian Hill are proven weapons against any Mountain West

defense, and now-eligible senior quarterback Cameron Coffman has a proven track record, throwing for 2,734 yards before transferring from Indiana. Coffman could add a shot in the arm to an offense that averaged just 21.1 points per game last season.

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

Montana	W	17-12	
Air Force	W	17-13	
at Oregon	L	14-48	
Florida Atlantic	W	20-19	
at Michigan St.	L	14-56	
at Hawaii	L	28-38	
San Jose St.	L	20-27	OT
at Colorado St.	L	31-45	
at Fresno St.	W	45-17	
Utah St.	L	3-20	
Boise St.	L	14-63	
at New Mexico	L	30-36	



Photos courtesy of Wyoming Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Eddie Yarbrough, DE
Shaun Wick, RB
Chase Roullier, LG

KEY DEPARTURES

Dominic Rufran, WR
Sonny Puletasi, DE
Mark Nzeocha, LB

AT NEW MEXICO » NOV. 7



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 4-8

USU trails series, 10-11

Conference: MW (Mtn.)

TV: CBSSN

Head Coach: Bob Davie

Kickoff: 1:30 p.m.

New Mexico's offense begins and ends with Jhurrell Pressley. The Lobos' primary offensive weapon powered the fourth-best ground game in the nation last season — New Mexico averaged 310 rushing yards per game in 2014.

Pressley ran for 1,083 total rushing yards and 12 touchdowns, but the passing attack averaged fewer than 90 yards per game. Lamar Jordan is expected to start at QB for the Lobos, but junior college transfer Austin Apodaca could contend for

the spot if Jordan fails to impress.

Defensively, middle linebacker Dakota Cox should return from knee surgery to help an experienced linebacker corps. Cox led the Lobos in tackles last year despite only starting nine games.



Photos courtesy of New Mexico Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Jhurrell Pressley, RB
Dakota Cox, MLB
Teriyon Gipson, RB

KEY DEPARTURES

Tevin Newman, LB
David Guthrie, S
LaMar Bratton, C

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

UTEP	L	24-31
Arizona St.	L	23-58
at New Mexico St.	W	38-35
Fresno St.	L	24-35
at UTSA	W	21-9
San Diego St.	L	14-24
at Air Force	L	31-35
at UNLV	W	37-28
Boise St.	L	49-60
at Utah St.	L	21-28
at Colorado St.	L	20-58
Wyoming	W	36-30

AT AIR FORCE » NOV. 14



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 10-3 USU leads series, 2-1
Conference: MW (Mtn.) TV: ESPN Networks
Head Coach: Troy Calhoun Kickoff: TBA

Defensive coordinator Steve Russ is doing something right. Two years ago, the Falcons were a miserable 0-8 in Mountain West games, allowing opposing offenses 40 points a night in a forgettable 2013 campaign.

Just one year later, that number was cut almost in half en route to a 10-win season that included wins over Boise State and CSU — two of the premier offenses in the conference — and a convincing bowl victory over Western Michigan. Now Air Force approaches a season full of promise with a defensive swagger and an offense full of veterans.

Air Force's secondary will enjoy the return of strong safety Weston Steelhammer, who exemplifies the Falcons' aggressive new defensive philosophy. The junior snagged six interceptions on his way to a first-team All-Mountain West selection last season. Quarterback Nate Ro-

mine played a backup role last year, but led the team in its upset over nationally ranked Colorado State at the end of the season. The run-heavy Falcons have a surprisingly deep receiving corps with Jalen Robinette, Garrett Brown and tight end Garrett Griffin. Robinette averaged 19

yards per catch last season after transitioning from quarterback and has an outside shot of being the best receiver in the conference in 2015. 1,000 yard rusher Jacobi Owens leads the stable of running backs.

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

Nicholls St.	W	44-16
at Wyoming	L	13-17
at Georgia St.	W	48-38
Boise St.	W	28-14
Navy	W	30-21
at Utah St.	L	16-34
New Mexico	W	35-31
at Army	W	23-6
at UNLV	W	48-21
Nevada	W	45-38
at San Diego St.	L	14-30
Colorado St.	W	27-24
Western Michigan	W	38-24



Photos courtesy of Air Force Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Weston Steelhammer, SS
Jalen Robinette, WR
Shayne Davern, FB

KEY DEPARTURES

Kale Pearson, QB
Jordan Pierce, LB
Christian Spears, FS

NEVADA » NOV. 21



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 7-6

USU trails series, 5-17

Conference: MW (West)

TV: ESPN Networks

Head Coach: Brian Polian

Kickoff: TBA

Inconsistency seemed to be a recurring theme for the Wolf Pack in 2014. A three game winning streak to end October helped Nevada qualify for a bowl game, but the team finished the season 1-3, including a humiliating 16-3 loss to Louisiana-Lafayette in the New Orleans Bowl.

Even with the experienced play of Cody Fajardo, the passing game

struggled last season – Nevada averaged less than 100 yards passing over the final three games.

Tyler Stewart won the quarterbacking job this season, but has attempted just 37 passes in his career. He'll rely on a receiving group that only has three upper classmen, running backs that were good but not great and an offensive line with more

questions than answers.

Though middle of the conference last year, the defense should be the strength of the team in 2015. Defensive end Ian Seau (the nephew of recent NFL Hall of Fame inductee Junior Seau) had a breakout season last year, leading the team in sacks and tackles for a loss. Losing linebacker Jon McNeal to the NFL will hurt, but

a bevy of starting-quality linebackers should be able to step up and hold the defense together. The concerns on defense are in the backfield; Nevada is relying on multiple underclassmen at the safety and cornerback positions. If the defense can mesh and the offense can mature quickly, the Wolf Pack could use a friendly home schedule to compete for the division title. If the offense is slow to develop or the defense doesn't improve as expected, it could be a long year in Reno.

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

Southern Utah	W	28-19
Washington St.	W	24-13
at Arizona	L	28-35
at San Jose St.	W	21-10
Boise St.	L	46-51
Colorado St.	L	24-31
at BYU	W	42-35
at Hawaii	W	26-18
San Diego St.	W	30-14
at Air Force	L	38-45
Fresno St.	L	20-40
at UNLV	W	49-27
Louis.-Lafayette	L	3-16



Photos courtesy of Nevada Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Don Jackson, RB
Jordan Dobrich, LB
Jarred Gipson, TE

KEY DEPARTURES

Cody Fajardo, QB
Charles Garrett, CB
Richy Turner, WR

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY » NOV. 28



» QUICK HITS

2014 Record: 8-5

USU trails series, 35-46-3

Conference: None

TV: CBSSN

HC: Bronco Mendenhall

Kickoff: 1:30 p.m.



Senior QB Taysom Hill is back for his final year, and expectations for the Cougar offense are at an all-time high. Heading into a home matchup against Utah State last season, BYU was riding high on a perfect 4-0 start when its 2014 campaign came to a

screaching halt.

With their playmaking quarterback suffering a broken leg in a 35-20 loss to USU, the Cougars struggled to find an identity offensively, dropping their next three games.

Following a 42-35 loss to Nevada,

the BYU defense emerged as a formidable group, carrying the Cougars to an 8-5 record and a memorable appearance in the Miami Beach Bowl. Now Hill returns, and a talented linebacker corps should continue to stop the run with impressive efficiency.

2014 SCHEDULE/RESULTS

at UConn	W	35-10	
at Texas	W	41-7	
Houston	W	33-25	
Virginia	W	41-33	
Utah State	L	20-35	
at Central Florida	L	24-31	OT
Nevada	L	35-42	
at Boise State	L	30-55	
at MTSU	W	27-7	
UNLV	W	42-23	
Savannah State	W	64-0	
at Cal	W	42-35	
Memphis	L	48-55	2OT



Photos courtesy of BYU Athletics

TOP RETURNING PLAYERS

Taysom Hill, QB
Mitch Matthews, WR
Kai Nacua, S

KEY DEPARTURES

Christian Stewart, QB
Paul Lasike, FB
De'Ondre Wesley, RT

Where Utah Gets Engaged!



S.E. Needham quality at internet pricing

S.E. Needham
jewelers since 1896

141 North Main • www.seneedham.com • 435-752-7149

Store Hours: Monday -Saturday 10:00 - 7:00